Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Water Quality Program

Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)

Evaluating the Effects of Conservation Practices on Water Quality within the Biophysical Setting of a Watershed

FY 2007 Supplemental Request for Applications

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION REQUIRED

APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 22, 2007



U.S. Department of Agriculture



Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

INTEGRATED RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM – NATIONAL INTEGRATED WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

CONSERVATION EFFECTS ASSESSMENT PROJECT (CEAP): EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES ON WATER QUALITY WITHIN THE BIOPHYSICAL SETTING OF A WATERSHED

SUPPLEMENTAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.303.

DATES: Applications must be received **by Grants.gov** by close of business (COB) on **May 22, 2007** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). **Electronic submission via Grants.gov is required for this program.** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy, Oversight, and Funds Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the National Integrated Water Quality Program-Conservation Effects Assessment Project RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES requests applications for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program—Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) for fiscal year (FY) 2007 to complete a synthesis of the 13 projects previously funded (FY 2004 – 2006) through the CEAP competitive grants program. The goal of this synthesis is to build a knowledge base that can be used to evaluate impacts of conservation practices and programs on water resources, improve the management of agricultural landscapes

to achieve environmental goals and inform policy decisions. This is a joint effort with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In FY 2007, CSREES anticipates that approximately \$600,000 will be available to support a single CEAP synthesis project, including funds contributed by NRCS. This RFA is a supplement to the FY 2007 National Integrated Water Quality Program (NIWQP) RFA. It identifies the objectives for CEAP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a CEAP grant.

Thirteen (13) CEAP watershed projects were funded in FY 2004 – 2006 to evaluate the effects of conservation practices, especially with respect to understanding how the suite of conservation practices, the timing of these activities, and the spatial distribution of these practices throughout a watershed influence their effectiveness for achieving locally defined water quality goals. An extensive body of literature exists that describes plot- or field-scale conservation practices aimed at protecting water quality. Prior to CEAP, research results from plot- and field-scale studies were limited in that they did not capture the complexities and interactions of conservation practices within a watershed. CEAP responded to a need to conduct research that: 1) evaluates the impacts of interactions among conservation practices and their biophysical setting on water quality at the watershed scale; and 2) evaluates social and economic factors influencing implementation and maintenance of practices. CEAP also responded to a need to conduct outreach education to transfer knowledge from this research to farmers, ranchers, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626) authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a research, education, and extension competitive grants program to provide funding for agricultural activities with a total integrated, multifunctional research, education, and extension approach (see definition in Part VIII, E.). Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award grants to colleges and universities (as defined by section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103)) on a competitive basis for integrated research, education, and extension projects. Grants are to be awarded to address priorities in United States agriculture that involve integrated research, education, and extension activities as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB). Section 7206 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 amended section 406(b) of AREERA to add the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions as eligible to apply for grants under this authority.

CSREES will administer the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program by determining priorities in U.S. agriculture through Agency stakeholder input processes in consultation with the NAREEEAB. Each RFA will be developed each FY based on these established priorities and approaches to solving the critical agricultural issues. While the overall approach to solving critical agricultural issues, priorities, or problems will be through an integration of research, education, and extension activities within each individual program, component RFAs, depending on the priority addressed, may request applications that are research, education, or extension only, or a combination thereof.

In FY 2007, CSREES anticipates that the entire Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program will be funded at approximately \$41,734,000 (after deduction for administrative expenses) for the following integrated activities: Water Quality (\$11,278,000), Food Safety (\$12,997,000), and Pest Management, which includes Regional Integrated Pest Management Centers (\$3,890,000), Crops at Risk (\$1,275,000), Risk Avoidance and Mitigation Program (\$4,219,000), Methyl Bromide Transitions Program (\$3,075,000), and Organic Transitions Program (\$5,000,000). Six of the seven Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program RFAs have already been released: one for Food Safety, one for Crops at Risk, one for Risk Avoidance and Mitigation Program, one for Methyl Bromide Transitions Program, one for Integrated Organic Program, which includes the Organic Transitions Program and Water Quality. This RFA announces and describes one component of the NIWQP, the CEAP project, a joint program with the NRCS. The total funding available for this joint program will be approximately \$600,000 contingent upon Congressional action. CSREES will provide approximately \$300,000 for this joint program and NRCS will contribute approximately \$300,000.

B. Purpose and Priorities

CEAP is a program area within the NIWQP. The goal of the NIWQP is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of our Nation's surface water and groundwater resources through research, education, and extension activities. Projects funded through this program will facilitate achieving this goal by advancing and disseminating the knowledge base available to agricultural, rural, and urbanizing communities. Funded projects should lead to science-based decision making and management practices that improve the quality of the Nation's surface water and groundwater resources in agricultural, rural, and urbanizing watersheds. A description of the purpose and priorities of the CEAP program area follows.

C. Program Area Description

The CSREES National Water Program promotes the synergistic interaction among funded projects. We expect that knowledge created through funded projects is shared at the community and watershed scale via education and outreach activities of the project. We also expect that knowledge is transferred among projects and across Program Areas within the NIWQP. Ultimately, funded CEAP projects should be sharing and coordinating project accomplishments with appropriate National Facilitation projects and Regional Water Quality Coordination projects. Likewise, National Facilitation and Regional Water Quality Coordination projects should coordinate activities to achieve synergistic effects of greater knowledge transfer and use among stakeholders and practitioners in the water resources community.

The Project Directors (PDs) are expected to participate in the annual CSREES National Water Quality Conference. Reasonable travel expenses to the CSREES National Conference may be requested as part of the project budget.

The intent of the NIWQP is to have CEAP projects funded by the program participate in, coordinate with, and share suitable information with the appropriate Regional Water Quality program. These interactions are intended to expand the geographic scope and impact of CEAP projects to a broader regional audience. Award recipients also are expected to provide copies of annual reports and updates to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Coordinator. Contact information for the Regional Water Quality Coordinator will be provided to award recipients at the time of the award.

Since 2004, CSREES and NRCS have jointly funded 13 watershed projects through a competitive grants program established to evaluate the effects of conservation practices on water quality at the watershed scale. The goal of these 13 watershed studies was to determine the measurable effects of agricultural conservation practices on water quality patterns and trends in surface and/or ground water at the watershed scale.

Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP)

Program Area 110.E

In this RFA we will solicit proposals to complete a synthesis of the 13 projects previously funded through the joint competitive grants program. Information about these projects and the joint competitive grant program appears at:

(http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap/csrees.html).

We anticipate making only one award in this program. The award will be up to \$600,000 for 48 months.

The goal of this synthesis is to build a knowledge base that can be used to evaluate impacts of conservation practices and programs on water resources, improve the management of agricultural landscapes to achieve environmental goals and inform policy decisions.

In order to accomplish this goal, the successful project should:

- Summarize and describe lessons learned across the 13 projects funded through the joint CSREES-NRCS competitive grants program about managing agricultural landscapes to meet physical, biological, and chemical water quality goals;
- Produce science-based knowledge that informs policy decisions to enhance the effectiveness of conservation programs and practices through improved design and implementation; and
- Provide outreach to key stakeholder groups that leads to greater effectiveness of conservation programs and implemented practices to achieve water quality goals.

Applicants must address all three of the following key RFA questions:

- 1. Across the 13 CSREES watersheds, what are the key findings from projects that addressed the original four RFA questions (bulleted below)? How do these findings differ by location and agricultural production activities, social or economic factors? What patterns emerge from this effort?
 - Within the hydrologic and geomorphic setting of a watershed, how do the timing, location, and suite of implemented agricultural conservation practices affect surface and/or ground water quality at the watershed scale?
 - What are the relationships among conservation practices implemented in a given watershed with respect to their impact on water quality? Are the effects additive, contradictory, or independent?
 - What social and economic factors within the study watershed either facilitate or impede implementation or proper maintenance of conservation practices?
 - What is the optimal set or suite of conservation practices and what is their optimal placement within the watershed in order to achieve water quality goals or to provide acceptable reductions in water quality impairments?
- 2. What combinations of practices work to protect or improve water quality in different geographic settings?
- 3. What outreach techniques were most effective at communicating information for different audiences, achieving adoption of practices, improving management and/or

maintenance of practices in different geographic settings?

Additional information about the CEAP program and the 13 watershed projects funded through the joint CSREES-NRCS competitive grants program is available at: http://www.csrees.usda.gov/water.

Synthesis Advisory Group:

The USDA has created a CEAP Steering Committee to provide leadership and coordination for CEAP activities in the Department. The CEAP Steering Committee consists of agency representatives from six USDA agencies with federal partners from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Geological Survey. The CEAP Steering Committee will serve as an Advisory Group for the successful synthesis project. Applicants should describe a project management plan that includes a description of how the PDs will interact with this Advisory Group. It is expected that at least one face to face meeting will occur per year among the PDs and the CEAP Synthesis Advisory Group. The role of the Advisory Group will be to monitor the progress of the synthesis project and to provide appropriate feedback to the project team regarding scope of work and progress toward goals and objectives of this RFA. The advisory group will also help to establish working relationships with the 13 CSREES funded projects.

Definition of the Project Team:

Project teams should be multi-disciplinary and should reflect the diversity of water quality issues including the complex social and economic diversity of the CEAP watersheds. Multi-institutional teams are encouraged and should represent the geographic diversity and national scope of the CEAP effort. Senior/key personnel should commit the appropriate time to insure project success.

The successful team must coordinate with project teams associated with the 13 CSREES CEAP watershed projects. Additional partnerships are encouraged with the appropriate agencies responsible for the planning and implementation of agricultural conservation and management practices.

Expected Project Outputs and Activities:

- 1) Describe a method for summarizing and synthesizing results and lessons learned from diverse watersheds and ecosystems including a summary of relevant literature for synthesis efforts.
 - Pilot the summary and synthesis process using the four CSREES-CEAP watershed studies funded in 2004. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 12 months of the project award funding date.
 - Revise methods and expand the project scope to include all 13 CSREES-CEAP funded watershed projects (see http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap/csrees.html). It is expected that this activity will be completed within 24 months of the project award funding date.

- 2) Provide a preliminary summary of the lessons learned across the 13 CSREES-CEAP watershed projects.
 - Organize and conduct one or more workshop(s) for CSREES-CEAP watershed investigators and teams to identify commonalities of projects and results. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 36 months of the project award funding date.
 - Identify potential outreach opportunities and collect stakeholder input for disseminating and implementing results of the CEAP synthesis study. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 36 months of the project award funding date.
- 3) Synthesize findings from the 13 CSREES-CEAP watersheds with those from other CEAP watersheds and other relevant watershed studies to advance the scientific basis for improving management and/or implementation of conservation programs and practices. Projects should consider institutional barriers and opportunities that affect success of conservation programs across the 13 CSREES-CEAP watersheds.
 - Summarize synthesis results. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 48 months of the project award funding date.
 - Suggest future directions for watershed scale investigations of the effectiveness of conservation practices on water quality. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 48 months of the project award funding date.
- 4) Identify outreach and education needs to inform decision-making for conservation program development and implementation.
 - Develop and publish in a peer reviewed outlet a strategy to address knowledge gaps through targeted outreach and education. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 24 months of the project award funding date.
 - Conduct targeted outreach activities with key stakeholder groups to begin implementation of synthesis results to improve management of agricultural landscapes. Evaluate and report on the impact of targeted outreach activities. It is expected that this activity will be completed within 48 months of the project award funding date.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. We anticipate making only one award in this program. The award will be up to \$600,000 for 48 months.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2007, only new applications may be submitted to the NIWQP Program.

<u>New application</u>. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the NIWQP Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

The maximum award will be \$150,000 per year including indirect costs. Total project periods should be 48 months. Applications received by grants.gov after the deadline date, requesting more than \$600,000 (including indirect costs), or proposing projects longer than 48 months will be returned without review.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of the NARETPA). For purposes of this program, the terms "college" and "university" mean an educational institution in any State which (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, from a school providing secondary education; (2) is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; (3) provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. Applications also may be submitted by 1994 Land-Grant Institutions (as defined in Part VIII, E., Definitions). A research foundation maintained by a college or university is not eligible to receive an award under this program. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in CSREES returning the application without review or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude CSREES from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

If a grant provides a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, the grant recipient is required to provide funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions.

CSREES may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if CSREES determines that:
(a) the results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or (b) the project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Address to Request Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to CSREES in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AR should see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

- 1. Download and install PureEdge Viewer, a small, free program that provides access to the grant application. See http://www.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp#pureedge.
- 2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov, click on "Apply for Grants" in the left-hand column, click on "Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions," enter the CFDA number 10.303 or funding opportunity number USDA-CSREES-ICGP-000448 in the appropriate box and click "Download Package." From the search results, click "Download" to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the "CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov." This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating PureEdge forms, using PureEdge with a Macintosh computer), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (http://grants.gov/). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

• Grants.gov customer support Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726

Business Hours: M-F 7:00 am – 9 pm Eastern Standard Time

Email: support@grants.gov

For additional resources for applying electronically visit these sites:

http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/app_help.html http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic_faq.html Tips on applying electronically Finding help

Frequently asked questions

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled "<u>A</u> <u>Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov</u>." This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III Section 3. of the Guide.

- 1. R&R Other Project Information Form
- a. Project Summary/Abstract (Field 6. on the Form). The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of NIWQP.
- b. Project Narrative (Field 7. on the Form).

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed **twenty** (20) pages of written text, figures and tables. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- (a) Introduction: Include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed activities. Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities which substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed activity, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:
- (1) Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research, education, and extension programs;
- (2) Role of the stakeholders in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation as appropriate; and
- (3) Reasons for having the work performed at the proposing institution.
- **(b) Objectives:** Include clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort in all proposals. CEAP Projects must include specific and integrated objectives for both research and extension.
- **(c) Methods:** Explicitly state the procedures or methods to be applied to the proposed effort. Include, but do not necessarily limit to:
- (1) Description of the proposed project activities in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out;

- (2) Techniques to be employed, including their feasibility and rationale for their use in this project;
- (3) Kinds of results expected;
- (4) Description of stakeholder involvement in project planning, implementation and evaluation;
- (5) Means by which extension activities will be evaluated;
- (6) Means by which data will be analyzed and interpreted;
- (7) Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
- (8) Pitfalls that might be encountered; and
- (9) Limitations to proposed procedures.
- (d) **Project Timetable:** Outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period. Include specific, measurable accomplishments for each year of CEAP funding.

In addition to the contents required above, applications must describe the roles and responsibilities of PDs and present a management plan for the administration of the project including facilitation of communication, planning, and annual report preparation.

2. Budget

Matching.

If an applicant concludes that matching funds are not required as specified under Part III., B., the R&R Budget must be utilized and a justification should be included in the Budget Narrative. CSREES will consider this justification when ascertaining final matching requirements or determining if required matching can be waived. CSREES retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

For those grants where matching funds are required as specified under Part III., B., the R&R Budget (Total Fed and Non-Fed) must be utilized. Applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is

made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The sources and the amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

3. CSREES Supplemental Information Form

a. Program Code (Field 2. on the Form). Enter the appropriate program code name and the program code exactly as it appears in the table below. Note that the Program Code is casesensitive. Do not include spaces in the Program Code. This data field is used to electronically route your proposal to the correct program.

Program Code Name	Program Code
Conservation Effects Assessment Project	110.E

b. Conflict of Interest List (Field 8. on the Form). A conflict of interest list is required under this program.

C. Submission Date and Time

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the CSRES Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on May 22, 2007 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message from CSRES within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.

D. Funding Restrictions

CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Section 709 of the FY 2006 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Public Law 109-97) limits indirect costs to 20 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 20 percent of total Federal funds awarded. Another method of calculating the maximum allowable is 25 percent of the total direct costs. Please note that if the FY 2007 Appropriations Act contains a different indirect cost limitation CSREES will contact each successful applicant to apply the correct rate prior to the award of a grant.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov."

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Technical merit of all aspects of the application, including research and extension components, as appropriate.

- (a) Adequacy and appropriateness of objectives for research and extension, as appropriate;
- (b) Suitability and feasibility of methodology for conducting work;
- (c) Reasonability of time allocated for attainment of objectives;
- (d) Qualifications of key project personnel;
- (e) Institutional experience and competence in proposed area of work; and
- (f) Adequacy of available support personnel, equipment, and facilities.

2. Relevance of proposed project to NIWQP purpose (see Part I, B.).

- (a) Relationship of project objectives to the Program Area Description (see Part I, C.).
- (b) Evidence of necessary involvement from interdisciplinary teams;
- (c) Inclusion of an interdisciplinary team that includes physical, chemical, biological and social scientists (as appropriate);
- (c) Extent to which partnerships with other institutions (Federal, State, other) are developed;
- (d) Extent to which end users were/will be involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation;
- (e) Probability of success of the project; and
- (f) Extent to which potential impact(s) can/will be documented.

3. Review criteria for specific program areas.

Conservation Effects Assessment Project (Program Area 110.E):

- (a) Extent to which the 13 CSREES Watershed projects are included in the project work plans;
- (b) Degree of integration of research and extension;
- (c) Degree to which spatial and temporal dimensions are incorporated in design of analyses, conclusions, and recommendations;
- (d) Suitability of scale;
- (e) Likelihood that project will fill knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of practices and programs and improve the quality of the Nation's water resources;
- (f) Identification of the appropriate audience or stakeholder group of interest and effectiveness of plan to deliver an extension/outreach program that will lead to measurable outcome-oriented impacts;
- (g) Appropriateness of management plan (developed with input from stakeholder advisory groups or others) and likelihood that it will lead to successful completion of project objectives; and
- (h) Quality of evaluation plans for assessing the impact of outreach activities on targeted stakeholder groups.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: http://www.hepinc.com.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program. CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view CSREES award terms and conditions);

- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and
- (11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220 and 230) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 7 CFR Part 3021—Government-wide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non profit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Annually, each grantee must submit a one- to two-page technical Summary of Work to the CSREES National Program Leader for Water Quality and to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Coordinator (see Part I, C. for more information). Once a project is complete, the grantee is required to submit a Final Technical Report to the CSREES National Program Leader for Water Quality and to the appropriate Regional Water Quality Coordinator. The Final Technical Report should summarize all work conducted and detail outcomes, accomplishments, and outputs of funded work. This report should not exceed 15 single-spaced, typed pages. PDs also must participate in annual conferences or symposiums, organized on behalf of the NIWQP, where project results and outcomes are presented and discussed.

Grantees are required to submit annual and summary evaluation reports via CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). CRIS is an electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Michael P. O'Neill; National Program Leader for Water Quality; Natural Resources and Environment Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210; Telephone: (202) 205-5952; Fax: (202) 401-1706; E-mail: moneill@csrees.usda.gov or Ms. Lisa Duriancik, Program Specialist, Natural Resources and Environment Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210; Telephone: (202) 401-4141; Fax: (202) 401-1706; E-mail: lduriancik@csrees.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

- a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.
- b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.
- c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.
- d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.
- e. The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.
- f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of

amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions are applicable:

1890 Land-Grant Institution means one of those institutions eligible to receive funds under the Act of August 30, 1890 (26 Stat. 419, chapter 841, 7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.) including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University.

<u>1994 Land-Grant Institution</u> means one of those institutions as defined in Section 532 of the Equity in Education Land-Grant Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note), as amended. These institutions are commonly referred to as Tribal Colleges or Tribal Universities.

<u>Administrator</u> means the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved is delegated.

<u>Authorized Departmental Officer</u> means the Secretary or any employee of the Department who has the authority to issue or modify grant instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

<u>Authorized Representative</u> means the president or chief executive officer of the applicant organization or the official, designated by the president or chief executive officer of the applicant organization, who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

<u>Budget period</u> means the interval of time (usually 12 months) into which the project period is divided for budgetary and reporting purposes.

<u>Cash contributions</u> means the applicant's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

<u>Education activity</u> means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

<u>Extension activity</u> means an act or process that delivers science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions.

<u>Grant</u> means the award by the Secretary of funds to an eligible organization or individual to assist in meeting the costs of conducting, for the benefit of the public, an identified project which is intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program as identified in these guidelines.

<u>Grantee</u> means an organization designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to which a grant is awarded.

<u>Integrated</u> means to bring the three components of the agricultural knowledge system (research, education, and extension) together around a problem area or activity.

<u>Matching</u> means that portion of allowable project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of in-kind contributions.

<u>Peer review</u> means an evaluation of a proposed project for scientific or technical quality and relevance performed by experts with the scientific knowledge and technical skills to conduct the proposed work or to give expert advice on the merits of a proposal.

<u>Project director</u> means the single individual designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the direction and management of the project, also known as a principal investigator for research activities.

<u>Prior approval</u> means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined above.

<u>Project</u> means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant award. <u>Project period</u> means the period, as stated in the award document and modifications thereto, if any, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

<u>Research activity</u> means a scientific investigation or inquiry that results in the generation of knowledge.

<u>Secretary</u> means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved is delegated.

<u>Third party in-kind contributions</u> means non-cash contributions of property or services provided by non-Federal third parties, including real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

<u>Total integrated, multifunctional research, education, and extension approach</u> means that the combination of grants (although the individual grants may involve only research, education, or extension activities or a combination thereof) awarded under the fiscal year's program components will work together to address the priorities in United States agriculture as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture in consultation with the Advisory Board, that involve integrated research, extension, and education activities.

<u>Urbanizing</u> means areas of agricultural and rural watersheds that are experiencing rapidly increasing land development pressure including but not limited to development for low, medium, and high density housing, industrial and commercial sites, and the infrastructure (roads, highways, utilities, etc.) needed to support this increased land development.

F. CSREES' Grants.gov Implementation Plans

CSREES is continuing to develop its capacity to exchange proposal and grant data electronically with its grantees through Grants.gov and to process, review, and award proposals and grants electronically.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, CSREES offered an electronic application option for select grant programs and partnered with five institutions to use Grants.gov Apply. CSREES utilized the SF-424 R&R (Research and Related) forms package (see 70 FR 9656, published in the Federal Register on February 28, 2005) along with CSREES Agency-specific forms and instructions to receive the electronic applications. These pilot activities were successful and provided lessons for applicants and CSREES.

As a result, for the FY 2007 (October 1, 2006-September 30, 2007) cycle, CSREES is requiring electronic submission through Grants.gov for some programs while providing a Grants.gov option for others. Please visit http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/fy07changes.html for information about FY 2007 submission requirements by program. For more information about CSREES' Grants.gov plans, including important announcements, program implementation, and detailed requirements, see the CSREES' web site,

<u>http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/other_links/egov/egov.html</u>. The information on these web sites will be updated as appropriate. It is suggested that the sites be visited periodically for important updates.

G. DUNS Number

A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Therefore, project directors should contact an AR to obtain the DUNS number or have the AR begin the steps needed to obtain one.

For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.